

**Final Environmental Assessment for the Fill/Borrow Site
at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida**

March 2007



**Prepared by the
Environmental Flight
Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida**

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**Environmental Assessment
At Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida**

Proposed Action: Excavate a fill/borrow site in a manner to provide recreational fishing and wetlands at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida

Type of statement: Environmental Assessment

Cooperating Agencies: None

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Abstract: The Alternative Action would excavate 96,000 cubic yards of soil to rebuild an existing dike. The excavation would be approximately ten acres in size and seven feet deep. The pit would fill with water given the depth of the water table.

Environmental impacts would include a slight increase in risk to safety associated with water related accidents with regards to the public and off-target drop zones for military personnel training with parachute jumps. The pond would not be used for water recreation or fishing. Noxious weeds currently exist in the project area and would have to be treated prior to construction. Soil disturbance from the excavation and long term recreation vehicle traffic would require future inspections for noxious weeds with potential treatments occurring on a long-term basis. The wetland plants that would occupy the excavation would be volunteer, pioneer species that are generally less desirable for a wetland plant community.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Environmental Flight at Avon Park Air Force Range (APAFR) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that creates and manages a recreational fishing pond at APAFR. This analysis was conducted in accordance with the *Regulations For Implementing The Procedural Provisions Of The National Environmental Policy Act* (40 CFR Part 1500-1508, 1 July 2006) and the *Environmental Impact Analysis Process* (32 CFR 989, 1 July 2006).

1.0 NAME OF ACTION

Excavate fill/borrow site at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would excavate approximately 96,000 cubic yards of material to rebuild an existing dike. The excavation would have irregular depths of up to eight feet, variable side slopes, an irregular perimeter, and would be approximately 20 surface acres in size. The excavation would commence during April and May of 2007. Wetland vegetation would be allowed to establish after two years time and fish would be introduced after the two year period. The pond would be managed for public fishing indefinitely.

2.2 Alternative Action

The Alternative Action would excavate the same amount of material, but the excavation would be rectangular in shape and about seven feet deep. There would be neither irregular side slopes nor an irregular perimeter.

2.3 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would not excavate the material. The site would remain in its present condition and use, a small watering pond for cattle in an improved grazing pasture.

3.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

3.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action has minor impacts to safety, invasive weeds, cattle grazing, fisheries, and wetlands. Risks to safety are water related accidents associated with boating, ground vehicles, fishing, and military personnel training with parachute jumps. Boating and fishing from shore carries inherent risks of drowning. While slight, it is also possible for ground vehicles to inadvertently travel into the pond as well. There are two military parachute drop zones nearby (approximately 1.5 miles away). While the pond is not in the drop zones, there is some risk associated with parachutists landing in the pond. Risk is minimized in that parachutists are trained to recover from water landings. Also, the pond would be recognized as a hazard during

the pre-jump briefing.

The noxious weed, tropical soda apple currently exists on the site. The weeds would be chemically treated prior to excavation. Disturbed soil during the excavation and long term vehicle travel to the site by recreationists would encourage tropical soda apple to persist at the site. Increased invasive weed management, usually chemically spraying,, would be required.

A new fisheries for bream and large mouth bass would be established at APAFR. Also, wetlands would be added. Both the new fisheries and wetlands would be viewed as a benefit to the environment. The wetlands would probably be low quality wetlands, however, due to the type of pioneer vegetation that would establish in the disturbed borrow pit. The quality of wetlands would be improved if desirable wetland and aquatic plants are planted, however, plantings are tentative and dependant upon funding.

The Proposed Action would require two permits from the State of Florida, funding for fish introduction and possible vegetation planting, and long term commitment to natural resource management.

3.2 Alternative Action

The Alternative Action would have the same safety hazards for parachute jumps as the Proposed Action. The public would also have access to the pond, but since it would not be developed nor stocked with fish, little if any addition risk to safety would result.

Tropical soda apple would still require increased management, at least during and after the ground disturbance. After disturbance, however, the management would not be as intense as the Proposed Action because recreational vehicles would not have access to the area. The quality of wetlands would be low because of the type of pioneer vegetation.

The Alternative Action would require one permit from the State of Florida, no funding for natural resource development, and no long term management commitments.

3.3 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would have the continued management and chemical treatment of tropical soda apple. No other impacts would be realized. No permits would be required.

4.0 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The attached EA was prepared and evaluated pursuant the National Environmental Policy Act (Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and IAW CFR 32-989 *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*. Based on the analysis presented in this EA, I conclude that creating a borrow pit at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida, as described under the Alternative Action, does not constitute a "major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment" when considered individually or cumulatively in the context of the referenced act, including both direct and indirect impacts. Also, there are no mitigation measures necessary to implement the Alternative Action. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

The Alternative Action was selected over the Proposed Action because initial and long term management commitments required to establishing and maintaining a fishery was foregone.

18 MAY 07

Date



KENNETH E. TODOROV, Colonel, USAF
Chairperson
Environmental Protection Committee

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Air Combat Command
AFI	Air Force Instruction
AIRFA	American Indian Religious Freedom Act
APAFR	Avon Park Air Force Range
BDU	bomb, dummy unit
CEQ	Council of Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DoD	Department of Defense
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement
ERP	Environmental Restoration Program
EO	Executive Order
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
FONSI	finding of no significant impact
ft	feet
MSL	mean sea level
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PPE	personal protection equipment
ROI	region of influence
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
TRI-DDS	Toxic Release Inventory Data Delivery System
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USC	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USCB	United State Census Bureau
WG	wing
WSF	weapon safety footprint

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1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 Introduction

As required by NEPA, the purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is to consider the effects of the proposed fill/borrow excavation activities, access trail, and fishing recreational created from the borrow area. This EA addresses the excavation and access route that would take place during 2007, and recreational access and activities that would continue indefinitely. The purpose of the fill/borrow is to excavate acceptable soil material for restoring the failing Arbuckle Marsh external dike to its original top elevation, width, and slope design specifications. As a result, the created borrow pond would provide recreation use and wildlife habitat wetlands. The resulting excavation site is viewed as an indirect effect that can potentially assist with an expanded recreational fishing need.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is strongly supportive for restoring the Arbuckle Marsh external dike to improve water quality in the Lake Okeechobee watershed. The SFWMD has employed the contract services of the Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation District to restore the dike and consequently create the borrow pit.

1.2 Background

Avon Park Air Force Range (APAFR) is located in Polk and Highlands Counties in Central Florida (Figure 1.2-1). The range complex covers approximately 106,073 acres and is about 10 miles east of Avon Park and 15 miles northeast of Sebring, Florida. The major highways serving the range are US Highway 27 and State Route 64. APAFR is the largest bombing and gunnery range east of the Mississippi River. The mission of APAFR is to provide a training infrastructure that allows US air and ground forces to practice the latest combat training techniques and procedures safely, efficiently, and realistically and to design training facilities that meet training needs. The 23 Wing, at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, is responsible for the operation and maintenance of APAFR, which is assigned to ACC. The range is used for bombing practice by US Air Force units from throughout the southeast.

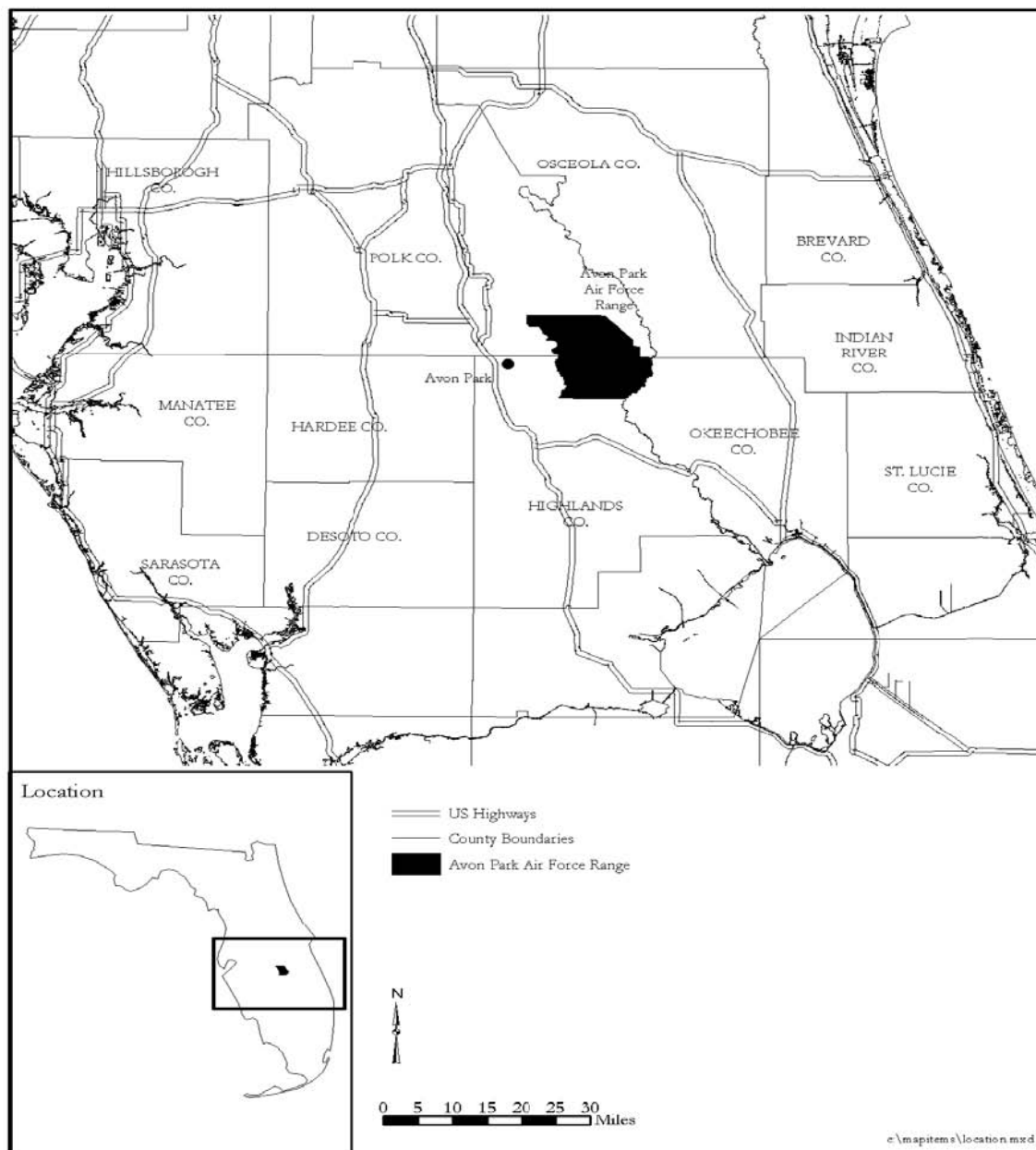


Figure 1.2-1 Avon Park Air Force Range area location, Florida.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would excavate of 96,000 cubic yards of soil, establish a 1,085 feet long unimproved vehicle access trail from the pond area to the main vehicle access trail (Ebersbach Trail), and a fishing recreational site resulting from the excavation. The Proposed Action would be located within uplands of the southwestern area on the Range (Sections 7 and 8, Township 33, Range 30, Tallahassee Principle Meridian), east of Arbuckle Creek and east of Ebersbach Trail (Figure 2.1-1).

Where the excavation would take place, there is an existing shallow pond that is approximately 82 feet wide and 213 feet long. The pond was created in the 1970s as a water source for cattle that are part of the Range grazing program. For this Proposed Action, the pond would be expanded to approximately 1,200 feet wide and irregularly shaped with differing depths (less than eight feet) and side slopes (10:1, 6:1, 3:1, and 2:1) (Figure 2.1.2). One portion of the pond would be sloped to allow put-in and take-out of a boat used for fish surveys. The pond would occupy approximately 20 surface acres. The pond would serve as an expanded recreational fishing area on the Range within two years of project completion, depending on funding, desired aquatic and wetland plants from nursery stock would be planted. Wetlands and upland vegetation would start establishing in the pond area within two years of project completion. This Proposed Action would create a new wetland area on the Range. To reduce the impact of excavating and moving soil, construction would be completed during the dry season, April through May 2007. The equipment used would be excavation equipment, bulldozers, and dump trucks. Temporary structural stormwater erosion controls would be in place and maintained for the duration of this project.

The excavated soil material would be used for restoring the Arbuckle Marsh dike to its designed elevation and correcting the dike's erosion. The dike's operational condition was much impaired in 2005 after a strong hurricane storm damaged and caused a breach on the southern end of the dike. The dike, built in the 1970s, is located approximately 0.8 miles south of the proposed action and lays 15,000 feet long, 40 feet wide at the base and 12 feet wide on the top. When restored to its intended designed elevation and maintained for reducing erosion, the dike would be able to retain approximately 10,000 acre-feet of water within Arbuckle Marsh. This dike restoration project, in which is not part of this EA project, is funded under South Florida Water Management District for the District's current Lake Okeechobee Restoration Plan.

2.2 Alternative Action

The Alternative Action would excavate the borrow pit as a rectangular excavation with a consistent depth of approximately seven feet and occupying approximately ten acres. The pit would fit within the Proposed Action's excavation (Figure 2.1-2) area and encompass the existing cattle pond. There would be no vehicle access trail nor would the pond be stocked with fish and managed for public use, nor would the pond be designed nor managed for the establishment of wetland vegetation.

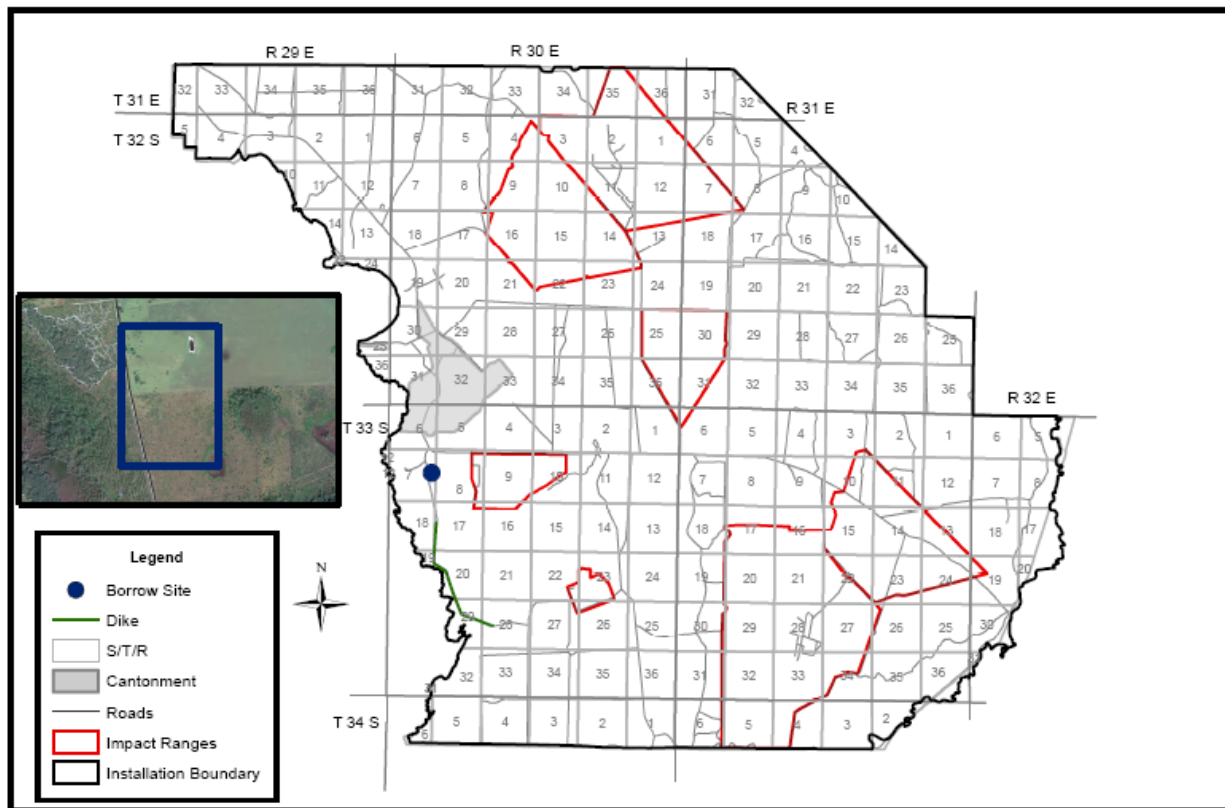


Figure 2.1-1 Proposed site area location, Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida.

2.3 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would not expand the existing pond or excavate soil material for restoring the 15,000-foot long Arbuckle Marsh external dike. Consequently, the external dike would not be restored to its designed elevation and the current erosion areas not corrected. In addition with the No-Action Alternative, the Arbuckle Marsh would not be able to maintain the 10,000 acre-feet of water storage capacity for the watershed basin.

2.4 Actions Considered, Not Pursued

The first alternative action considered (then not pursued) was for soil to be obtained from an off-site location. The transportation of off-site excavated material to the Range property would be costly and prohibited the external dike restoration project.

Additionally, a second alternative action considered (then not pursued), obtained borrow material from an alternative location on the Range. The location of the dike would not allow feasible distances to an appropriate site location. This alternative would significantly increase project costs, prohibiting the dike restoration project. Also, this second alternative action would not expand an existing pond facility.

2.5 Required Permits

- A State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection *Generic Permit for Stormwater Discharge from Construction Activities that Disturb Five or More Acres of Land* would be required prior to excavating the borrow pit. This permit is issued under the provisions of Section 403.0885, Florida Statutes pursuant to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) federally approved National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulatory program. Statutory authority for this permit is provided by Section 402(p)(2) of the Federal Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251-1376) and regulated under 40 CFR Part 122. This permit would be required for the Proposed Action and Alternative Action.
- A State of Florida Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) issued by FDEP would be required prior to excavating the borrow pit. This permit is issued under the provisions of Section 373.046, Florida Statutes. This permit would be required for the Proposed Action only.

These permits would be applied for and terms and conditions implemented by the Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation District.



Figure 2.1-2 Proposed fill/borrow and access trail site at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Airspace and Aircraft Operations

Airspace management includes the handling, directing, and controlling of flight operations in the air. For aircraft operations, the impact ranges and auxiliary airfield were used 27% and 11%, respectively, of their capacity during 1997- 2003 (USN 2005). Use in 2007 is expected to be the same. The airspace region of influence (ROI) encompasses an area within a 30-nautical-mile radius of APAFR from the ground surface up to 18,000 feet mean sea level. This represents a three-dimensional volume of airspace that supports air-to-ground conventional and tactical weapons delivery training, tactical navigation training, advanced air-to-air combat training; and equipment and personnel airdrop training.

3.2 Safety

The project area is fenced, limiting access of vehicle traffic. When accessible to the public, access is limited to non-vehicle use. Since 1971, no known rescues or injuries have occurred in the project area.

3.3 Noise

The project area is located in a remote area on the southwest portion of the APAFR. Minimal human activities occur on the site to generate noise. Sources within the area generating noise may include firearms for hunting and military training, vehicle traffic, and military aircraft. To date, no known noise complaints for the project site have been reported to APAFR.

3.4 Air Quality

The project area is located in a remote area within Highlands County; currently the County is identified as an attainment zone. Currently, no activities exist to cause an air quality concern. No past air quality complaints have been reported to APAFR for the project area.

3.5 Hazardous Materials and Waste

Military training activities using hazardous materials do not exist on the project location. No evidence of hazardous materials and waste disposal activities has been observed or reported to the APAFR.

3.6 Environmental Restoration

Based on available information, ERP activities do not exist within the identified project site limits.

3.7 Water Resources

Watershed and Surface Water: Arbuckle Marsh receives the majority of its surface water from three tributaries east of the dike. The three tributaries are Morgan Hole Creek with a watershed of 16,328 acres, Tomlin Gully with 1,344 acres, and an unnamed tributary with 4,000 acres. All of the tributaries are intermittent with little or no flow during the dry season and with peak flows during the wet season (June through September). Arbuckle Creek flows through the western portion of Arbuckle Marsh and contributes to Arbuckle Marsh west of the dike when the creek overflows its banks and occupies its floodplain Figure 3.7-1).

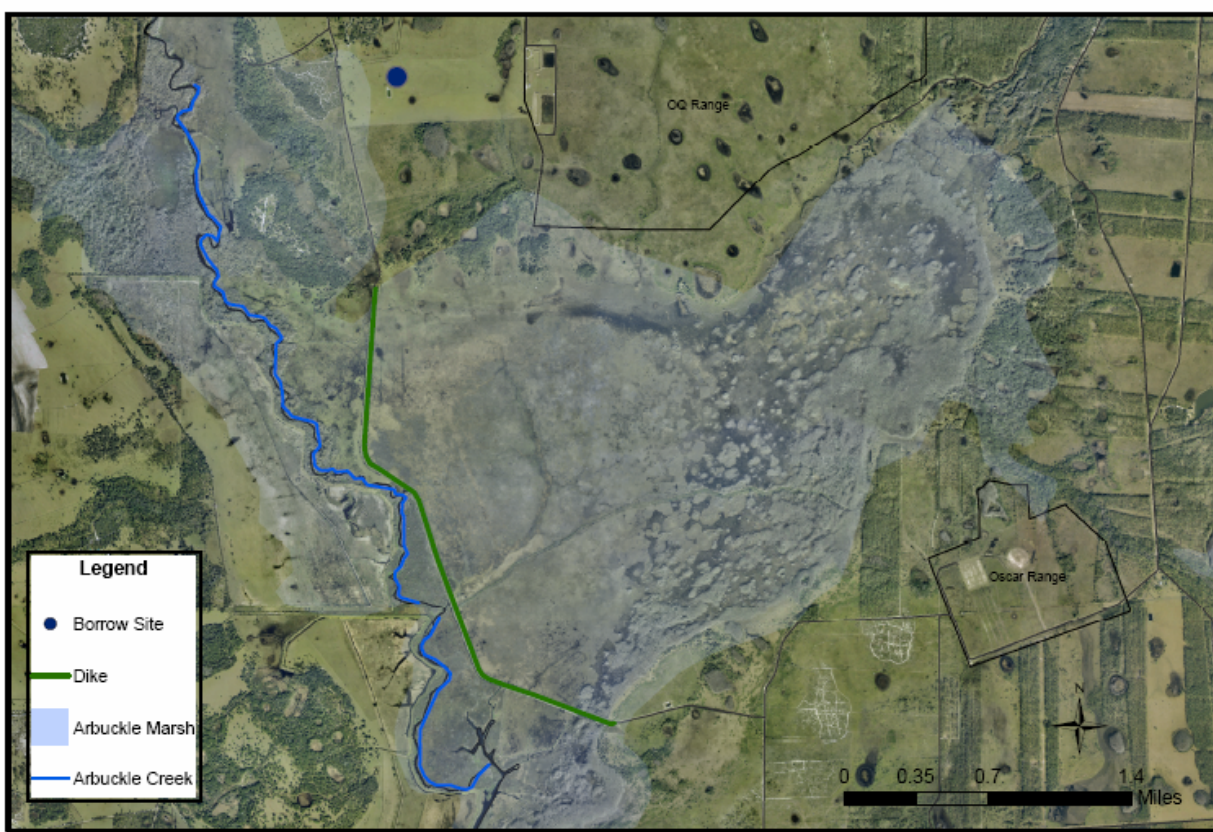


Figure 3.7-1 Arbuckle Marsh Dike and borrow site location, Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida.

Aquifers: There are three fresh-water aquifers at APAFR. The deepest is the Floridan Aquifer. The Floridan Aquifer is 50 feet to 400 feet deep. Water recharge for this aquifer is from large sinkhole lakes that have breached confining clay layers above the Floridan Aquifer. The Floridan Aquifer meets the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) drinking-water standards and is the source of drinking water at APAFR. Above the Floridan Aquifer is the Intermediate Aquifer. The Intermediate Aquifer is separated from Floridan Aquifer by a confining clay layer. The Intermediate Aquifer is approximately 200 feet at APAFR. Water recharge is from sinkholes that have breached the confining clay layers above the Intermediate Aquifer. Water quality is acceptable for drinking water. Above the Intermediate Aquifer is the Surficial Aquifer. The Surficial Aquifer layer consists of quartz sand and clay. The surficial aquifer is 50 feet to 200 feet. The Surficial Aquifer is recharged by the water table above it.

Water Table: On October 11, 2006 the water table was measured from four to 4.5 feet below the existing ground surface. The estimated seasonal high water table for the site area is estimated two feet below the ground surface.

Wetlands: APAFR is approximately 51% wetlands. Wetlands are found to the west, south and an isolated wetland to the east of the site. On the west, wetlands flow into the Arbuckle Creek or are isolated. Arbuckle Marsh is located to the south of the site. The water level within the Marsh area is approximately 51.6 MSL during the wet season. The wetlands in the area include pine swamps, sloughs, and depression ponds.

3.8 Geology and Soils

The proposed pond area is located in a grassy, grazing field of the Range. The area soils are classified as Immokalee sand. One field exploration was conducted on 11 October 2006 and consisted of three hand borings to approximately four feet below ground surface. The hand borings were conducted within the proposed borrowing site location to determine the Unified Soil Classification of the collected soil samples. One boring was conducted to the east, south and west of the existing pond at the proposed site. Soil samples consisted of light to medium brown very fine sand and clay.

3.9 Vegetation

The present day vegetation of the site to be impacted by the proposal is an “improved pasture”. None of the existing vegetation is in natural condition. The pasture is currently dominated by pasture grasses and some forbs. Historically the vegetation of the site prior to alteration was Florida dry prairie. Under the proposed action the upland vegetation would be converted to open water, thereby eliminating any potential for restoration of the site to Florida dry prairie.

No state or federally listed plants are known to occur within the boundaries of the proposed action and none are expected to be impacted by any of the proposed activities.

3.10 Grazing Management

The project is located in cattle grazing Management Unit Four with gates and fencing controlling cattle access. The existing pond on the project site is solely used as a cattle-watering pond since soil excavation, approximately 1972. The unit consists of approximately 7,368 acres with 168 acres in the improved grass pasture. This area currently provides livestock watering while the livestock are in the pasture.

3.11 Invasive Plant Species

A site survey conducted on 11 January 2007 found tropical soda apple in the project area. These will be chemically treated before work begins.

3.12 Forestry

Forestry activities are not within the project site area.

3.13 Fish and Wildlife

Table 3.13-1 identifies all known endangered and threatened animal species on APAFR.

Table 3.13-1. Federally Listed Wildlife Species at Avon Park Air Force Range.		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status
Florida grasshopper sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum floridanus</i>	E
Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	E
Wood stork	<i>Mycteria Americana</i>	E
Florida panther	<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>	E
Florida scrub-jay	<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>	T
Audubon's Crested Caracara	<i>Polyborus plancus audubonii</i>	T
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T
Eastern Indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	T

E = Endangered, T = Threatened

APAFR's relatively undisturbed natural land is managed to support the Range's mission for providing military air and ground training while maintaining the Range natural ecosystem. The project site's existing grazing land currently has limited fish and wildlife habitat. The pond's low water levels during the dry season may increase foraging habitat for Wood Stork and Crested Caracara. However, larger foraging areas (near Arbuckle Lake) exist on the APAFR and are more populated by bird species than the proposed project site.

Audubon's crested caracara (*Caracara plancus audubonii*) is a species characteristic of the grassland ecosystems of central Florida and is one of the state's most distinctive birds. The Florida population is threatened and widely separated from the main species' range, which extends from extreme southwestern Louisiana, southern Texas, and southern Arizona to the tip of South America.

Caracaras are relatively long-lived and strongly attached to their territories, residents may persist in a territory despite unfavorable changes, but may not be replaced by new individuals when they finally leave or die. The result may be a significant time lag before the effects of deleterious habitat changes are reflected in an actual population decline.

The Crested Caracaras' preferred habitat is open, lowland countryside, like pastures, savannas, river edges, and ranches. They may also be found in some forests and marshes. They usually feeds on carrion, but they will take advantage of any food opportunity by eating small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, turtles, fish, crab, eggs, insects, worms, and nestling birds. Caracaras hunt live food on the ground or take food from other birds. Caracaras spends a great deal of time on the ground. They build a massive stick nest in a palm, cactus, tree, or on the ground. The female usually lays 2 - 3 eggs that are incubated for 28 - 32 days. The young caracaras have a drawn out fledging period, taking up to 3 months before they are flying as independent birds.

In central FL caracaras may start nesting as early as December. The nesting season may extend to late April or early May. As of 2006, a nesting pair of caracaras was documented near the

intersection of Ebersbach and Kissimmee Road, just north of the proposed borrow excavation site.

3.14 Recreation

The area is located in the Recreational Management Unit 13. The unit consists of approximately 7,317 acres, of which approximately half of the area is occupied by Arbuckle Marsh. Hunting and wildlife viewing exists within the project area, but is very limited because the area is an improved pasture. To the south, wildlife viewing of waterfowl and shore birds occurs in and along Arbuckle Marsh.

3.15 Military Training

The mission of APAFR is to provide a training infrastructure that allows U.S. air and ground forces to practice the latest combat training techniques and procedures safely, efficiently, and realistically, and to design training facilities that meet each using unit's needs. The range is used for air-to-air combat and air-to-ground bombing and gunnery training by DoD aircrews, as well as other DoD military units for a variety of training activities. These activities include artillery firing, search and rescue operations, joint service exercises, and other ground training exercises.

APAFR has four active air-to-ground impact areas. The impact areas include two scorable tactical, air-to-ground ordnance impact areas - South Tactical (Echo) and North Tactical (Foxtrot) - and two scorable conventional, air-to-ground ordnance impact areas - South Conventional (Charlie) and North Conventional (Bravo). Within these impact areas, approximately 90 targets, such as simulated airfields, mock villages, military vehicles, aircraft, missiles, and convoys, are available for air-to-ground and ground-to-ground training primarily using inert/practice bombs and gunnery. APAFR builds and maintains these targets. In addition, to the four active impact areas discussed above, four other impact areas have been or are currently being used for training exercises: Alpha, OQ, Delta, and Oscar Ranges. All other lands within APAFR are reserved for future military training; however, range-authorized activities (hunting, grazing, forestry, and recreation) may occur if training operations allow.

The project site is not located within an existing military impact area. The nearest impact areas include OQ, located 3,123 feet east from the project site and Oscar, located 18,488 feet southeast from the project site. Two parachute drop zones are located within 1.5 miles of the project site.

3.16 Cultural Resources

Definition of the Resource: Cultural resources comprise prehistoric or historic sites, districts, buildings, structures, objects, and other evidence of human activity. These include: archaeological resources, historic architectural and engineering resources, and traditional cultural properties. Archaeological resources are locations where human activity has altered the earth or left deposits of physical remains (e.g., stone tools, bottles, structure ruins). Historic architectural and engineering resources include standing buildings, dams, canals, bridges, and roads. Buildings generally must be 50 years or older, although military structures from the Cold War era (1946 to 1989) can be considered significant if they are of exceptional importance to the Cold War military mission. Traditional cultural properties are associated with the practices and beliefs of a living community. Significant cultural resources are those that are eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or that are important to

traditional groups as outlined in the *American Indian Religious Freedom Act* (AIRFA), the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA), and Executive Order 13007. Cultural resources that are unevaluated for NRHP-eligibility are treated as potentially eligible until evaluation is complete.

The U.S. Air Force is required to comply with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* (NHPA), including SHPO and American Indian consultation, during the EA process. In 1999, the DoD promulgated its American Indian and Alaska Native Policy that emphasizes the importance of respecting and consulting with tribal governments on a government-to-government basis. The policy requires an assessment, through consultation, of the effect of proposed DoD actions that may have the potential to significantly affect protected tribal resources, tribal rights, and Indian lands before decisions are made by the armed services.

Identified Cultural Resources: As of 2006, more than 150 cultural resources consisting of prehistoric, historic, and multicomponent sites had been recorded on APAFR. Of these sites, 23 were determined to be eligible or potentially eligible for the NRHP. Currently, no resources on APAFR are listed in the NRHP (NRIS 2006). In July, 2006 Geo-Marine, Inc. conducted a Phase I cultural resources survey of 40 acres in the vicinity of the existing cattle pond in preparation for the borrow excavation (Figure 3.16-1). In October, 2006 APAFR staff Archaeologist Ronald Grayson, RPA, performed an additional Phase I cultural resources survey on areas outside of the initial Geo-Marine, Inc. survey. These additional 16 acres would be used to accommodate additional excavation and ground disturbing activities in the Area of Potential Effect of the borrow pond excavation. One prehistoric site, the Borrow Pond site (8HG1112) was identified at the southern extreme of the survey area. The Borrow Pond site consists of 6 non-cortical, lithic reduction flakes and was determined ineligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO (Appendix A). Even though the site was ineligible for listing in the NRHP, the project boundary was adjusted to avoid the site by an additional 50 meters.

No cultural materials were identified within the proposed area of potential effect of the borrow pond excavation. These surveys completed a minimum of at least a Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment Survey all land involved in the project.

There are no known traditional cultural properties on APAFR associated with American Indian traditions or beliefs (USAF 2003). One Euro American traditional cultural property, Fort Kissimmee Cemetery, is associated with the earliest Euro American settlers of the region. Members of the Fort Kissimmee Cemetery Association retain ownership of the parcel of land containing the cemetery, as well as a small piece of property that extends to the Kissimmee River. The Association maintains the cemetery and continues to inter their dead at that location (USAF 2003).

3.17 Wildfire and Prescribed Fire Program

The project site is not located in a prescribed fire management unit. Based on available information, no known wildfires have occurred at this location.

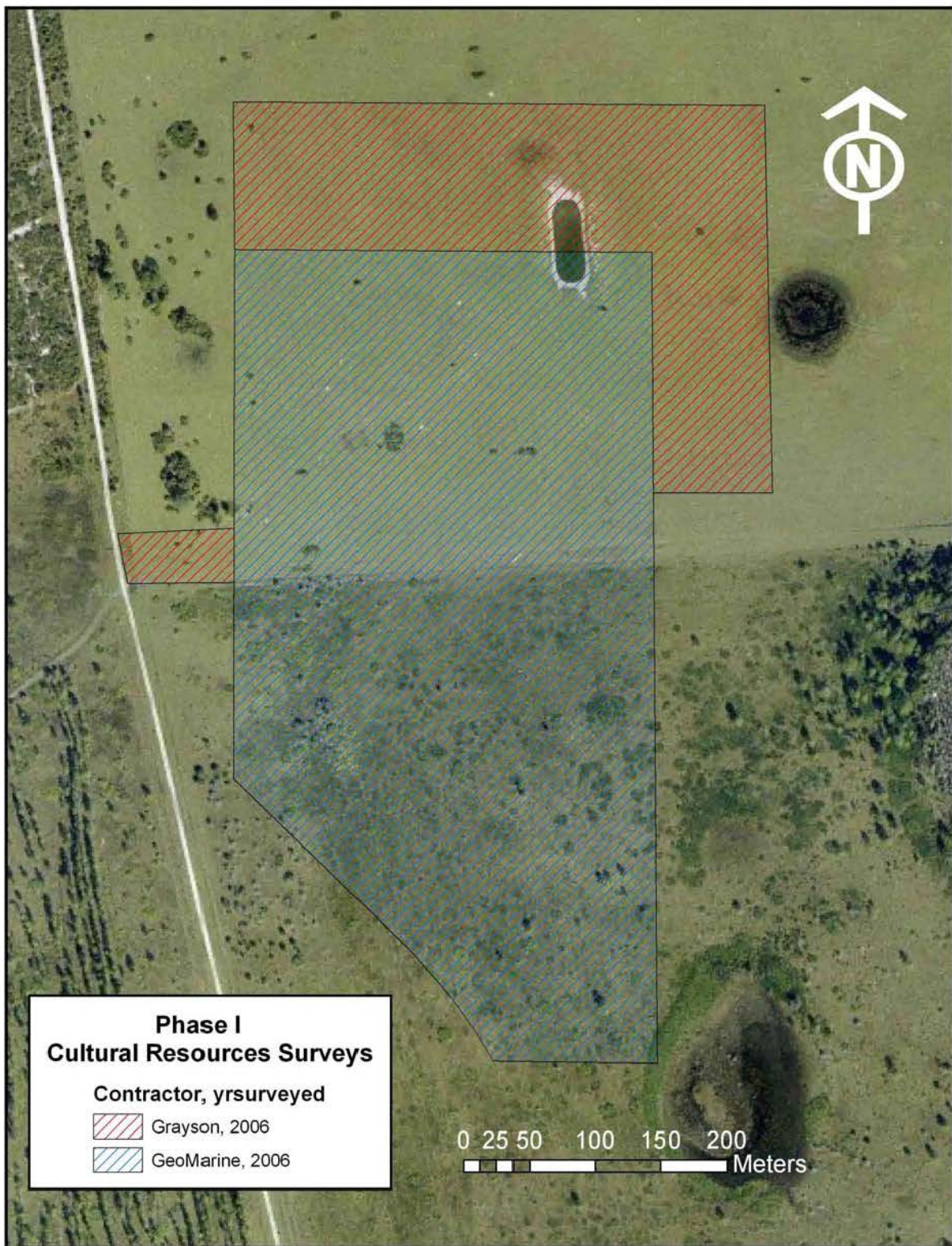


Figure 3.16-1 Phase I Cultural Resources Survey for project area at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Airspace and Aircraft Operations

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would have no additional impacts on the APAFR airspace and operations.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action has no additional impacts on the APAFR airspace and operations.

No-Action Alternative: For the No-Action Alternative, operations would be unchanged from the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.2 Safety

Proposed Action: Proposed activities for open public fishing access on the site would increase the potential risk for vehicle (ground vehicles or watercraft) rescues and water-related accidents.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action's activities for enlarging the current pond's depth, width and length would slightly increase the potential risk for mishaps with vehicles, cattle, general public users, and military training. This potential risk would be less than the Proposed Action since the pond would not generate a large general public usage.

No-Action Alternative: For the No-Action Alternative, the rate of incidence would be unchanged from the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.3 Noise

Proposed Action: During the excavation activities for the proposed project, operating equipment would increase noise levels. The operating equipment noise would have a limited impact, affecting the workers assigned to the proposed project site. All workers assigned to the project site will have the appropriate hearing PPE. Proposed activities for open public fishing access on the site would increase the potential for noise generated from the public recreational visitors and vehicle use. Since this site is in a remote location, the noise from the proposed activities would not be a noise disturbance to others.

Alternative Action: For the Alternative Action's activities, the level of noise would be the same as the proposed action.

No-Action Alternative: For the No-Action Alternative, noise levels would be unchanged from the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.4 Air Quality

Proposed Action: Air quality impacts would not occur with this proposed activity. The proposed project construction activities would not affect the area's air quality. Only, insignificant diesel air emissions would exist from the excavation equipment used. APAFR reports the storage and usage of diesel fuel under Sections 311 and 312 of the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.

Alternative Action: For the Alternative Action activities, the air quality impacts, emissions, equipment storage and reporting requirements would be the same as the proposed action.

No-Action Alternative: For the No-Action Alternative, air quality levels would be unchanged from the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.5 Hazardous Materials and Waste

Proposed Action: The construction related activities for the proposed project are not expected to generate any hazardous waste, and a small amount of solid waste. Unused materials would be taken offsite upon completion of the project. If a spill from operating equipment were to occur, it would be contained and cleaned-up by the contractor and reported to the Environmental Flight at the APAFR. The solid waste generated would be collected and disposed offsite on a daily basis.

The proposed activities related to the increased recreation usage would generate an insignificant amount of solid waste. The public would use no hazardous materials during recreational activities. For proper disposal the user would carry solid waste generated by the public back to the outdoor recreation office. Trash is collected on a predetermined schedule and no change to the schedule is needed due to the limited quantity that would be generated.

Alternative Action: For the Alternative Action activities, there would be a minimal amount of potential concern for hazardous materials and waste management during construction activities.

No-Action Alternative: For the No-Action Alternative, there would be a limited solid waste generation, and no potential for the storage and generation of hazardous materials and waste.

4.6 Environmental Restoration

Proposed Action: Based on available information, no solid waste management units or areas of concern exist within the identified project site limits, therefore no impacts are anticipated with IRP site areas.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action activities impact on ERP site areas would be the same as the Proposed Action.

No-Action Alternative: No known ERP site areas exist on or within the vicinity of the project area, therefore the No-Action Alternative would not have an impact.

4.7 Water Resources

Proposed Action: The proposed pond expansion of approximately 1,200 feet wide would benefit the water quality and the groundwater within the area. The project would increase the overall wetlands and eventually an increase for wetland type vegetation on APAFR within the Arbuckle Creek basin. Erosion and sedimentation controls would be in place for the area prior to excavation and construction activities. This soil excavation project would be completed during the winter dry season. Within a year and a half the proposed pond area would have new vegetative growth, limiting the extent of sediment discharges. Given the nature of disturbance, pond design, and unrestricted access to cattle, less desirable wetland plant species (cattails, pond

primrose) that do not promote plant and animal diversity will likely establish. These species would have to be chemically or mechanically treated to encourage plant and animal diversity. This scenario would be even more acute if desired species are not planted.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action would be similar as the Proposed Action. The pond side slopes would be steeper with less vegetative coverage and therefore increase sediment discharge and erosion compared to the Proposed Action.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would be unchanged from the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.8 Geology and Soils

Proposed Action: The existing pond of 86 feet wide would be expanded to approximately 1,200 feet wide and irregular shaped with differing depths and side slopes. The proposed pond would involve excavating approximately 96,000 cubic yards of soil. To reduce the impact of excavating and moving soil, construction would be completed during the winter dry season. To lessen the potential impact of sedimentation runoff, erosion and sediment controls would be placed around the site.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action would involve excavating approximately 96,000 cubic yards of soil. The excavation would result in a pond depth of eight feet. Stormwater and erosion controls would be used for controlling site sedimentation during excavating and staging work activities. The alternative action's limited pond design and construction activities would increase future erosion of the pond bank compared to the proposed action.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would have no changes to the project site land.

4.9 Vegetation

Proposed Action: The improved pasture would be converted to open water under the proposed action. The amount of acres displaced from improved pasture vegetation is marginal.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action would also convert improved pasture to open water.

No-Action Alternative: Under the No-Action Alternative, the vegetation of the site would remain in improved pasture and would be maintained for livestock grazing and forage production.

4.10 Grazing Management

Proposed Action: The increased depth and pond bank slope improvements would enhance the area's existing usage of livestock watering for the grazing program. The additional fence access and trail on the western portion of the management unit would be a beneficial access area utilized by the grazing program, to the cattle Management Area Four.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action's activities impact to the grazing program would enhance the existing livestock watering usage with the increased pond surface area. The Alternative Action limits the scope of work for designing and constructing appropriate pond

bank slope dimensions for livestock safety.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would have no impact to the grazing management program.

4.11 Invasive Plant Species

Proposed Action: Tropical soda apple was found during a site survey conducted on 11 January 2007. Removal would be planned before site work begins. The increase for invasive species on the site would increase due to the increase in public access availability with vehicle (ground vehicles or watercraft) usage.

Alternative Action: Tropical soda apple was found within the project site area, though the potential for invasive species would be limited and the occurrence less than the Proposed Action.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would limit the potential for an increase in invasive plant species growth on the project site.

4.12 Forestry

Proposed Action: Forest Management activities do not exist within the project site limits, therefore no impacts are associated with the APAFR forestry program.

Alternative Action: Forest Management activities do not exist within the project site area; there would be no impacts.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would not change the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.13 Fish and Wildlife

Proposed Action: A USFWS informal consultation was completed on 27 October 2006 for this proposed site project (Fredlake e-mail, Appendix A). Project has no potential for affecting threatened or endangered species or critical habitats.

A variety of bird species exist on the APAFR's large natural resource area. The excavated borrow pit would be a foraging site, though limited on its impact, to the APAFR existing bird species including the Wood Stork, Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egrets and the Crested Caracara.

No known fish populations are known to exist within the cattle-watering pond. The existing pond surface area and total depths would be increased and fish populations (Bass and Brim) introduced for recreational fishing, if funded. Compared to existing areas on the Range, this project site is not planned to become a sizeable foraging location for wildlife. Work activities would cease in the localized area if Gopher Tortoise or the Eastern Indigo Snake species were identified, Environmental Flight would be notified immediately. The extent of the project site excavation activities would be isolated to the project site area having a discountable effect on fish and wildlife.

The site would be surveyed for gopher tortoise burrows to ensure that no burrows are in the area

of concern; if there's a long period between time of survey and construction activities then another survey should be conducted to ensure site is still free of burrows prior to construction activities (would assist in providing info of potential Eastern indigo snake sites). Tortoises would be removed from the site if discovered prior to excavation.

The proposed borrow site/pond may potentially benefit the crested caracara by providing an additional feeding site. Recommend construction activities take place outside nesting season if possible. Caracara nest at Ebersbach and Kissimmee may encounter minor disturbance from construction activities (road noise) if construction occurs during nesting season, but affect would be short lived. Attempts to locate the 2006 nest site should be made prior to construction activities to determine status of nesting activities or to determine if nest still exist.

Alternative Action: Procedures for natural resource and erosion control management during work activities for the Alternative Action would be the same as the Proposed Action. The Alternative Action project efforts would have a reduced habitat for wildlife compared to the Proposed Action. The Alternative Action would have a discountable effect on fish and wildlife.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would not change the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.14 Recreation

Proposed Action: The proposed project would increase public recreation usage for fishing and wildlife viewing. Access to the site would increase with the proposed trail and gate access open to the public during unrestrictive recreation scheduled times.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action would have a slight increase for public recreation usage at the project site.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would not have an impact on public recreation usage at the project site.

4.15 Military Training

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would not occupy an approved para-jump drop zone. However, establishing a 20 acre pond near drop zones to the north and east (approximately 1.5 miles away) would enhance the military activity and the training environment for the Range by establishing an additional water hazard area. This hazard impact would be minor compared to other, existing hazards (power lines, fences tall trees) impacts from the existing training facilities located on the Range property. Also, military para-jumpers are trained to recover from water landings.

Alternative Action: Military training impacts would be the same as the Proposed Action for the project site.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would not have an impact on military training at the project site.

4.16 Cultural Resources

APAFR entered into a Section 106 consultation as per the NHPA via letter correspondence to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on 26 October 2006 (Appendix A). APAFR determined no adverse effect to cultural or historic resources with SHPO concurrence received on 30 November 2006 (Appendix A).

APAFR initiated tribal consultation with eleven tribes on 26 October 2006 (see Appendix A for sample letter). On 30 October 2006 the Miccosukee Tribe responded via e-mail that they concurred with the determination that there is no cultural, historical, or religious site of the tribe at the location (Appendix A). On 01 November 2006 the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma responded via e-mail that the project should proceed, and that should human remains, artifacts or sites be uncovered during excavation that they should be contacted (Appendix A). No other responses from Native American Tribes were received.

All of the areas effected by the proposed actions have been subjected to Phase I cultural resources assessment surveys. Within the surveyed area, no cultural resources eligible for listing in the NRHP have been identified. The proposed action would have no effect on cultural resources. The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on significant cultural resources.

Alternative Action: The Alternative Action's activities would not have an impact, no known cultural resources exist on or within the vicinity of the project area.

No-Action Alternative: No known cultural resources exist on or within the vicinity of the project area, therefore the No-Action Alternative would not have an impact.

4.17 Wildfire and Prescribed

Proposed Action: The project site is not expected to have an impact on wildfires or prescribed burning program.

Alternative Action: Impacts would be the same as the Proposed Action for the project site.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would not change the existing conditions present at the project site.

4.18 Cumulative Impacts

Proposed Action: No other new activities in the near future are known for the project area or near the project area. Therefore the impacts would be limited to the excavation and the projected recreational use.

Alternative Action: Cumulative impacts would the same as the Proposed Action, except that there would be no recreational use.

No-Action Alternative: There would be no cumulative impacts.

4.19 Relationship Between Short-term Use of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

Proposed Action: Excavation and road traffic to the dike to the south would prohibit public access and recreation to the project site and the north portion of Arbuckle Marsh, approximately two months time during April and May 2007. Cattle grazing would be curtailed from the project area during the same time. Long term productivity would include a new body of water designed to promote warm water sport fish habitat and encourage wetlands.

Alternative Action: The short-term impacts would be the same as the Proposed Action. While a new body of water would exist, it would not have the fisheries and would have a minor amount of wetlands.

No-Action Alternative: There would be neither impacts nor changes in productivity.

4.20 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Proposed Action: Petroleum, oils, and lubricants as well as vehicle wear and tear for excavation would be irretrievable. The 20 acres transformed from an improved grazing pasture to a pond could be reversed and re-established as grazing pasture, although at great expense.

Alternative Action: The commitment of resources would be the same as the Proposed Action.

No-Action Alternative: There would be no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

4.21 Environmental Justice

Environmental justice was established by Executive Order 12898 in an effort to prevent federal activities from deliberately excluding or subjecting minority and low income populations to situations that adversely affect human health or the environment. Census Tract 0157 in Polk County contains minority populations (USCE 2000). This tract encompasses the northwest quarter of APAFR as well a property north and west of APAFR. The greatest concentration of the population of this tract is located at the Avon Park Correctional Institution and the Avon Park Youth Academy located adjacent and west of APAFR.

Proposed Action: The minority populations are geographically distant from the project area and would not be affected by excavation or future recreation. Equipment accessing APAFR would travel through correctional property via a main road, but the impacts would be minimal.

Alternative Action: The impacts would be the same as the Proposed Action.

No-Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

4.22 Coastal Zone Management

The Proposed Action, Alternative Action, and No-Action Alternative would be in compliance with the Florida Coastal Zone Management Plan and would have no adverse affects on coastal zones.

5.0 LITERATURE CITED

Ardaman & Associates, Inc. November 02, 2006 Limited Geotechnical Exploration Report for the Proposed Arbuckle Marsh Dike Restoration at APAFR, Florida.

United State Air Force (USAF) 2003. *Cultural Resource Management Plan of Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida*. Prepared by OL A DET 1, 347OG/CEV, Avon Park Air Force Range, FL, Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.

United States Census Bureau (USCB), 2000. <http://tiger.census.gov>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey of Polk County, Florida. 1990.

U.S. Navy. 2005. Environmental Impact Statement for Navy Air-to-Ground Training at Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida. Contract No. N68711-01-D-6205.

6.0 TRIBES, AGENCIES, AND PUBLICS CONTACTED

Ms. Grace Bunner
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Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
Box 706
Okemah, OK 74859

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P.O. Box 580
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Ms. June Fixico
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P.O. Box 332
Wetumka, OK 74883

Mr. Jerry Haney
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P.O. Box 1498
Wewoka, OK 74884

Mr. Roland Poncho
Chairperson
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Livingston, TX 77351

Mr. Joe Quetone
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Tallahassee, FL 32301

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Seminole Tribe of Florida
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Mr. John Thomas
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Mr. Steve Terry
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Mr. Tarpie Yargee
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Mr. Mark Fredlake
USFWS Liason
23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVN
475 Easy Street
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Dr. Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D.
Director and State Historic Preservation
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500 South Bronough Street
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7.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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NEPA Program Manager
Avon Park AFR, FL
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Additional Environmental Flight staff
members:

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Lead Wildlife Biologist
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University
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Ron Grayson - RPA, Contractor
Archeologist
Avon Park AFR, FL
Florida State University, 2004
Years of Experience: 3

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Avon Park AFR, FL
MS, Water Resources and Bioenvironmental
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1973
Years of Experience: 21

Clarence Morgan
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B.S. Forest Resource Management,
University of Idaho, 1982
Years of Experience: 20

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B.S. Forestry, University of Florida, 1976
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M.S., Southern Illinois University,
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Wayne Taylor
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Officer
Avon Park AFR, FL
B.S., University of Florida,
Years of Experience: 5

**APPENDIX A: RECORD OF CONSULTATION WITH
TRIBES, AGENCIES, AND PUBLICS.**



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Sue M. Cobb

Secretary of State

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Mr. John B. Pechiney, Lt Col, USAF
DET 1, 23 WG/CC
29 South Boulevard
Avon Park Air Force Range, FL 33825-9381

November 30, 2006

Re: DHR Project File No. 2006-09876 / Received by DHR: October 30, 2006
*Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment Survey of a Proposed Borrow Pond Avon Park
Air Force Range Highlands County, Florida*

Dear Mr. Pechiney:

Our office received and reviewed the above referenced mitigation report in accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* (Public Law 89-665), as amended in 1992, and 36 C.F.R., Part 800: *Protection of Historic Properties*, and Chapters 267 and 373, *Florida Statutes*, for assessment of possible adverse impact to cultural resources (any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object) listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)*, or otherwise of historical, architectural or archaeological value.

In September 2006, Geo-Marine, Inc (GMI) conducted a cultural resources survey of the proposed Avon Park Borrow Pond on behalf of the Department of the Air Force. GMI located one archaeological site during the course of the investigation and determined that it is ineligible for listing in the *NRHP*.

It is the opinion of GMI that the proposed Borrow Pond will have no effect on cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the *NRHP*. GMI recommended no further cultural resource investigations.

Based on the information provided, our office concurs with these determinations and finds the submitted report complete and sufficient in accordance with Chapter 1A-46, *Florida Administrative Code*.

If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact Scott Sorset, Historic Sites Specialist, by phone at (850) 245-6333, or by electronic mail at srsorset@dos.state.fl.us. Your continued interest in protecting Florida's historic properties is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Frederick P. Gaske, Director, and
State Historic Preservation Officer

500 S. Bronough Street • Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250 • <http://www.flheritage.com>

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Sue M. Cobb

Secretary of State

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Mr. John B. Pechiney, Lt Col, USAF
DET 1, 23 WG/CC
29 South Boulevard
Avon Park Air Force Range, FL 33825-9381

December 7, 2006

RE: DHR Project File Number: 2006-9988
Received by DHR: October 30, 2006
Creation of a 4 Acre Recreation Pond
Avon Park Air Force Range, Hillsborough County

Dear Lieutenant Colonel Pechiney:

This office received and reviewed the above referenced project in accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, as amended and *36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties* and the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*, as amended. The State Historic Preservation Officer is to advise Federal agencies as they identify historic properties (listed or eligible for listing in the *National Register of Historic Places*), assess effects upon them, and consider alternatives to avoid or minimize adverse effects.

This office concurs with the determination of the U.S. Air Force that the above referenced federal action will have no adverse effect to historic properties.

If you have any questions, please contact James Toner, Historic Sites Specialist, by electronic mail at jtoner@dos.state.fl.us, or at 850-245-6333.

Sincerely,

Frederick P. Gaske, Director, and
State Historic Preservation Officer

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Zechiel Tod Civ 23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVN

From: Fredlake Mark J Contr 23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVN
Sent: Monday, December 18, 2006 1:56 PM
To: Vallar Karen Contr 23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVC
Cc: Zechiel Tod Civ 23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVN; 'Karen.Vallar@tetrattech.com'
Subject: Pond proposal, effects on T&E species

Karen: I know that you and spoke about this project back in October.

Below were some of my early ideas about the project.

Just for the record, let me reiterate some points of my discussion with you:

The pond will, in all likelihood, not have an adverse effect on threatened or endangered species on Avon Park. The three bird species most often considered, Florida grasshopper sparrow, Florida scrub jay, and red cockaded woodpecker do not occur on, or in reasonable proximity to, the project location. The eastern indigo snake, a species most often associated with gopher tortoise burrows in flatwood and scrub communities, is not likely to occur on site.

Three species may derive some benefit from the pond project; wood stork, bald eagle, and crested caracara. Under section seven of the Endangered Species Act the action agency must consult on projects which have an effect, even beneficial projects. However this project is small relative to the home range of these wide-ranging birds. Under such circumstances, the effect may be regarded as discountable. As a result the action agency can safely assume that the pond will have no effect on T&E species.

I hope this helps you in preparing the final NEPA document if you have any further questions feel free to call or email.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
DETACHMENT 1, 23RD WING
AVON PARK AIR-GROUND TRAINING COMPLEX
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA, AND AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE, FLORIDA

26 October 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR Ms. Laura Kammerer
Supervisor, Compliance and Review
Bureau of Historic Preservation
Division of Historical Resources
R.A. Gray Building, 4th Floor
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

FROM: DET 1, 23 WG/CC
29 South Boulevard
Avon Park Air Force Range, FL 33825-9381

SUBJECT: Creation of a Four- Acre Pond

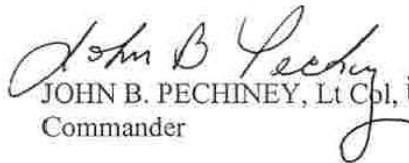
FILE

1. In accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, as amended, and *36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties*, this letter is to initiate Section 106 consultation with the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) about the proposed construction of a four-acre recreation pond on Avon Park Air Force Range (APAFR).
2. Due to continued maintenance of a dike in Arbuckle Marsh (DHR 2003-8304), local fill is needed. APAFR intends to remove the fill from around an existing cattle pond and make the pond suitable for public use. The expansion will require widening the pond to approximately four acres in size. Additionally, an access road from Ebersbach Road, staging area, and parking lot will be created to facilitate public use. The total area of potential effect includes the pond, parking lot, and access road. The total area of potential effect is 34 acres (Figures 1 and 2). The entire area lies within a low probability for archaeological resources according to the established APAFR archaeological probability map.
3. All areas affected by the proposed pond and associated infrastructure have been subjected to a Phase I Cultural Resource Assessment Survey to identify any Cultural Resources (Figure 3). The central 19-acre portion was surveyed by Geo-Marine, Inc., in the summer of 2006 (Figure 4), the report of which is still being written. The surrounding 16 acres and access road were surveyed by APAFR staff archaeologist in October 19-20 (Figure 5). The report of those investigations has been forwarded to your office. One prehistoric archaeological site (8HG1112) was discovered by this survey and determined to be ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The borrow-pond boundary was altered to avoid it, providing a buffer of 20

meters (Figure 6). These surveys revealed no cultural resources within the area affected by the proposed borrow pond.

5. It is the determination of the U.S. Air Force that the proposed training will have no effect on historic properties.

6. If you have any questions, please contact Ron Grayson at (863) 452-4119, ext 306, or by electronic mail at ronald.grayson@avonpark.macdill.af.mil.


JOHN B. PECHINEY, Lt Col, USAF
Commander

Attachments:

1. Area of Potential Effect, USGS 7.5" quad map, Lake Arbuckle NE and SE
2. Area of Potential Effect, Aerial Photograph
3. Surveyed Areas, USGS 7.5" quad map, Lake Arbuckle NE and SE
4. Planview map depicting location of shovel tests and features within Borrow Pit, with inset USGS 7.5" quad map, Lake Arbuckle NE and SE depicting survey area boundaries, From Geo-Marine, Inc. 2006 (Report in production)
5. Grayson 2006 Survey Area, USGS 7.5" quad map, Lake Arbuckle NE and SE
6. Location of 8HG1112, USGS 7.5" quad map, Lake Arbuckle NE and SE



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
DETACHMENT 1, 23RD WING
AVON PARK AIR-GROUND TRAINING COMPLEX
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA, AND AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE, FLORIDA

26 October 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Pare Bowlegs, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
PO box 1498
Wewoka OK 74884

FROM: DET 1, 23 WG/CC
29 South Boulevard
Avon Park Air Force Range, FL 33825-9381

SUBJECT: Creation of a Four-Acre Pond

1. In accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, as amended, and *36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties*, this letter is to initiate Section 106 consultation with the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) about the proposed construction of a four-acre recreation pond on Avon Park Air Force Range (APAFR).

2. Due to continued maintenance of a dike in Arbuckle Marsh (DHR 2003-8304), local fill is needed. APAFR intends to remove the fill from around an existing cattle pond and make the pond suitable for public use. The expansion will require widening the pond to approximately four acres in size. Additionally, an access road from Ebersbach Road, staging area, and parking lot will be created to facilitate public use. The total area of potential effect includes the pond, parking lot, and access road. The total area of potential effect is 34 acres (Figures 1 and 2). The entire area lies within a low probability for archaeological resources according to the established APAFR archaeological probability map.

3. All areas affected by the proposed pond and associated infrastructure have been subjected to a Phase I Cultural Resource Assessment Survey to identify any Cultural Resources (Figure 3). The central 19-acre portion was surveyed by Geo-Marine, Inc., in the summer of 2006 (Figure 4), the report of which is still being written. The surrounding 16 acres and access road were surveyed by APAFR staff archaeologist in October 19-20 including systematic shovel testing (Figure 5). One prehistoric archaeological site (8HG1112) was discovered by this survey and determined to be ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The borrow pond boundary was altered to avoid it, providing a buffer of 20 meters (Figure 6). These surveys revealed no cultural resources within the area affected by the proposed borrow pond.

5. It is the determination of the US Air Force that the proposed training will have no effect on historic properties.

6. Please respond to the letter within thirty (30) days indicating whether you wish to provide input on this action. If you do not respond or request an extension of time to review the proposed action and the effects it may have on tribal cultural issues, the Air Force will move forward with the next phase of the project. Thank you for your consideration of the proposed action and for taking part in the NEPA process. If you have any questions, please contact Ron Grayson at (863) 452-4119, ext 306, or by electronic mail at ronald.Grayson@avonpark.macdill.af.mil.


JOHN B. PECHINEY, Lt Col, USAF
Commander

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6. Location of 8HG1112, USGS 7.5" quad map, Lake Arbuckle NE and SE

Grayson Ronald Contr 23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVN

From: Pare Bowlegs [hpo@seminolenation.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 01, 2006 12:36 PM
To: ronald.Grayson@avonpark.macdill.af.mil
Subject: Four acre pond.

Mr. Grayson,

Feel free to proceed with the project of build the 4 acre pond. However, if any human remains, artifacts or sites are uncovered during this time, please contact me as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Paer Bowlegs

Historic Preservation Officer
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
Wewoka, Ok. 74884
1-405-257-7292
www.seminolenation.com

Grayson Ronald Contr 23 WG DET 1 OL A/CEVN

From: Steve Terry [SteveT@miccosukeetribe.com]
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2006 4:15 PM
To: ronald.grayson@avonpark.macdill.af.mil
Subject: Creation of a 4 acre pond

The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida has reviewed this notification and attachments. After consultation with Mr. Dayhoff and careful review of the documentation provided, the Tribe determined that there is no cultural, historical, or religious site of the Tribe at this location. This determination was based on the documentation provided by Avon Park Air Force Range.

Thank you for consulting with us. Please call me at (305) 223-8380, Ext. 2244, if you require further information.

Steve Terry
NAGPRA & Section 106 Representative
Miccosukee Tribe
P.O. Box 440021
Miami, FL 33144-0021
(305) 223-8380, Ext. 2243
Stevet@miccosukeetribe.com

APPENDIX B: RECORD OF RESPONSES TO AGENCY COMMENTS ON DRAFT EA.

Summary of Responses to Agency Comments		
Source of Comment	Revised Document In Response to Comment	Concurrence Noted
Ms. Kelly Cranford South Florida Water Management District, comments to Florida State Clearinghouse, 16 February 2007.		
1. SFWMD designing dike restoration with associated borrow pit, deferred permitting the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.	Added Section 2.5 Required Permits. Added SFWMD and Highlands County involvement in second paragraph in Section 1.1 Introduction.	√
Ms. Lucy Blair, FDEP South District, comments to Florida State Clearinghouse, 16 February 2007.		
1. FDEP will process permit, request ERP permit.	Added Section 2.5 Required Permits.	√
2. Possible impacts to crested caracara.	Added comments in Sections 3.13 second paragraph and 4.13 Fish and Wildlife fifth paragraph.	√
3. Inquired how wetlands would be established in the borrow pond.	Added comments in Section 2.1 Proposed Action in second paragraph on possible nursery stock planting. Added comments in Section 4.7 Water Resources in first paragraph on likelihood of undesirable wetland plant species.	√
Other comments added to final EA.		
1. Gopher tortoise survey and relocation prior to excavation.	Added comments in Section 4.13 Fish and Wildlife.	
2. Fish introduced to borrow pit depending on funding.	Added comments in Section 2.1 Proposed Action, second paragraph and Section 4.12 Fish and Wildlife, third paragraph.	
3. Pond sloped to allow boat for fish surveys added to pond design.	Section 2.1 second paragraph.	
4. Alternative Action selected.	Modifications in abstract of summary page and Section 4.0 of FONSI.	



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Charlie Crist
Governor

Jeff Kottkamp
Lt. Governor

Michael W. Sole
Secretary

February 19, 2007

Mr. Tod P. Zechiel, NEPA Coordinator
OL A, DET 1, 23 WG/CEVN
29 South Boulevard
Avon Park AFR, FL 33825-9381

RE: Department of the Air Force – Draft Environmental Assessment for the Fill/Borrow Site
at Avon Park Air Force Range – Highlands County, Florida.
SAI # FL200701263028C

Dear Mr. Zechiel:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated a review of the draft environmental assessment (EA).

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) notes that the proposal is an alternative water storage project and part of the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery (LOER) plan. SFWMD staff are designing and certifying a portion of the proposed project. Since the SFWMD is participating in the design, staff has deferred permitting and/or exemption decisions to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. For further information, please contact Kelly Cranford, P.E., Lead Engineer at (863) 462-5260, ext. 3005.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) advises that the South District's Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) section will need to review the proposed project to determine the ERP permitting requirements. DEP staff requests that the U.S. Air Force submit additional information regarding the project details and schedule. Please note that the South District is currently processing a submittal from Florida Power & Light for proposed impacts to pasture lands. Those pasture lands are considered to be habitat for the Crested Caracara – the subject document suggests a similar situation at this location. Also, the creation of high quality wetlands within upland areas is difficult to accomplish successfully and frequently results in a cattail marsh. How will this issue be addressed in this case? Are there any wetland areas scheduled for impact in the near vicinity that can act as "top soil donors?" This can increase the probability of success. DEP District staff requests that the ERP applicant schedule a pre-

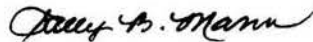
Mr. Tod P. Zechiel
February 19, 2007
Page 2 of 2

application meeting, if possible, at your convenience. Please contact Ms. Lucy Blair, Program Administrator, at (239) 332-6975, ext. 157, for additional information and assistance.

Based on the information contained in the draft EA and the enclosed state agency comments, the state has determined that, at this stage, the subject project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The federal agency must, however, address the concerns identified by our reviewing agencies prior to project implementation. The state's continued concurrence with the project will be based, in part, on the adequate resolution of issues identified during this and subsequent reviews. The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during the environmental permitting stage.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft EA. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Lauren P. Milligan at (850) 245-2170.

Sincerely yours,



Sally B. Mann, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

SBM/lm
Enclosure

cc: Gordon Romeis, DEP, South District
Jim Golden, SFWMD



Florida

Department of Environmental Protection

"More Protection, Less Process"



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Project Information	
Project:	FL200701263028C
Comments Due:	02/16/2007
Letter Due:	02/26/2007
Description:	DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE FILL/BORROW SITE AT AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE - HIGHLANDS COUNTY, FLORIDA.
Keywords:	USAF - FILL/BORROW SITE AT AVON PARK AFR - HIGHLANDS CO.
CFDA #:	12.200
Agency Comments:	
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION - FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION	
No Comment	
STATE - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE	
No Comment/Consistent	
SOUTH FLORIDA WMD - SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	
This project is an alternative water storage project and part of the LOER (Lake Okeechobee & Estuary Recovery) plan. SWMD staff are designing (and signing/sealing) a portion of the proposed project. Since the SWMD is participating in the design, staff will defer any permitting and/or exemption decisions to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Kelly Cranford, P.E. Lead Engineer (863) 462-5260, ext. 3005	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	
The DEP South District, Environmental Resource Permitting staff would review the proposed project, which will require an ERP permit. Please provide additional information regarding the proposed ERP application submittal timeframe or any timelines that are critical. Please be advised that the South District is currently processing a submittal from Florida Power & Light that also impacts pasture lands. These pasture lands are considered to be habitat for Caracara. The subject documents suggest a similar situation at this location. Also, the creation of wetlands in a formerly upland area has always been very difficult and frequently results in a cattail marsh. How will this be addressed in this case? Are there wetland areas scheduled for impact in the near vicinity that can act as "donors" for top soil? This often leads to a higher success probability. District staff requests that the applicant schedule a pre-application meeting if possible, either in the office or on site. Ms. Lucy Blair, Program Administrator Environmental Resource Permitting (239) 332-6975, ext. 157	

For more information please contact the Clearinghouse Office at:

3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

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